

Testimony by Iris Baez, mother of Anthony Baez (killed by NYPD in 1994)

Submitted to the New York City Council Public Safety Committee Oversight Hearing on The City's Policing Reform Process January 11, 2021

I am Iris Baez, the mother of Anthony Baez. As many of you know, my son Anthony was murdered by NYPD Officer Francis Livoti in 1994 after Livoti put him in a chokehold that was banned by the police department. That was 20 years before Eric Garner was killed.

I want to thank Councilmember Adrienne Adams, the chair of the Public Safety Committee and the City Council for hearing from the families first today.

More than anyone, we – the mothers, the sisters, the brothers, the family members of those the NYPD murdered - we understand the danger of letting the NYPD keep killing with no accountability.

I have been fighting non-stop against police brutality and racist violence since my son Anthony was murdered – it's been 26 years.

I helped pass City Council laws like the Community Safety Act and Right To Know Act.

I helped pass state laws like the repeal of 50a and the special prosecutor law.

I sat next to Gwen Carr every day of the Pantaleo discipline trial to make sure she had support from someone who had gone through that – most of us have never even been able to see the officer who killed our loved one be fired.

I'm probably the only mother in NY who can say that I saw the officer who murdered my son go to federal prison.

But that doesn't mean I've seen justice.

None of us families has seen justice.

I have a serious message to deliver to you today.

We are tired. Us mothers, and families are sick and tired of promises and words from the government.

Talk is cheap and laws don't create change if you don't have the courage to back it up.

You have other families on this panel with me who are still fighting to fire the police who killed their loved one.

Victoria and Victor have been fighting for almost FIVE YEARS now for their brother Delrawn and for Officer Wayne Isaacs to be fired.

That is unacceptable.

I've been hearing about what Governor Cuomo is asking all the cities to do and I can tell you now that the way NYC is handling it is terrible.

When there's a lot of protests and we make a lot of noise, the NYPD and elected officials always say they're going to reform the police.

They say what they think we want to hear and then go behind closed doors and do whatever they want.

They don't make real change.

The townhalls the NYPD have been doing won't change anything.

After Anthony was killed 26 years ago, I organized a townhall meeting. Police came. Elected officials came. They said they were going to make all these changes. But there was no change.

20 years later they choked Eric Garner to death and his mother had to fight for more than 5 years just to get Pantaleo fired. de Blasio still hasn't fired the other officers.

After Anthony was killed, they retrained police. After Eric Garner was killed they retrained police.

We don't want to hear about any more trainings – trainings don't hold police accountable, trainings don't lead to firings, trainings only give the police more money.

The Mayor and NYPD's process is fake and will make no change. The only way to make change is to have other people – not the NYPD and not de Blasio - have control of the process and families like mine need to help lead that.

We need you in the City Council to be the peoples' voice.

We need you to help make sure that the officers who killed Delrawn Small, Mohamed Bah, Kawaski Trawick, Antonio Williams, Allan Feliz are all fired immediately.

We can't keep making families fight for years and years just to try to get an officer fired.

We need you to understand why the families support defunding the NYPD, and we need you to support us.

We and our Black and Latino youth are the ones who have suffered the most because of police violence.

We need you to work with us so that we can move some of the money from the police department to our communities – so our communities can be safe from violence, including violence from the NYPD.

We need you to work directly with us families and the people to pass strong laws and pass a strong plan for the Cuomo process – not a fake plan and fake reforms.

I've been doing this a long time. I didn't ever plan to be an activist and a leader but when the NYPD murdered my son, I had no choice.

Will you work with me so we don't have to keep fighting the same fight year after year and so we can really end police violence? Please let me know that.

Thank you and God Bless.